

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 6-8 and 12-14 have been canceled, and claims 15-18 have been added. Therefore, claims 1-5, 9-11, and 15-18 are pending in this application.

One of the inventors, Mr. Stephen M. Dawson, acting on behalf of the other named joint inventors, conducted a personal interview with Examiner Thomas Ho and Supervisory Patent Examiner Judy Swann on May 20, 2003, as summarized in Paper No. 13 of the application file history. During the interview, demonstrations of certain physical embodiments were made by Mr. Dawson, and the prior art references of Dawson and Murphy were discussed. Specifically, the Office indicated that the claims could be amended, possibly using means-plus-function language, to "recite that the seal allows for movement for a certain range of separation, but keeps the magnet in position to be able to re-engage the face opposed to the magnets." Interview Summary, Page 3.

Claims 1 and 2 have been amended to employ means-plus-function language to properly describe certain elements of the invention in terms of structure. The "means" that is the subject of the amendment is for performing multiple functions: (a) mechanically coupling the rotor to the stator, and (b) permitting the rotor to move axially independently of the stator within a range of separation, or permitting axial sliding. Structurally, therefore, this "means" (as amended) provides for a loose mechanical coupling, but with the magnetic urging of the rotor and stator (in an assembled, or "coupled" configuration) into re-engagement after any separation or sliding that may occur during operation. In this configuration and in operation, the inventions of claims 1 and 2 are distinguishable from Dawson in view of Murphy, because Murphy only teaches that a separation of rotor and stator must be accomplished. Neither Murphy nor Dawson, either alone

or in combination, teach that the mechanical coupling of the rotor and stator must also permit the rotor and stator to move "axially independently" within a predetermined separation range, or that it must permit "axial sliding" within that mechanical coupling.

Claim 9 has been amended to more accurately define the invention and to distinguish the invention over Dawson and Murphy. Specifically, claim 9 defines a flange and groove structure which provides for the mechanical coupling of the rotor to the stator. The engagement of the flange and groove establishes a predetermined distance within which the rotor may move "axially independently" once those components are mechanically coupled. As with claims 1 and 2 above, neither Dawson nor Murphy, either alone or in combination, teaches that the movement of the rotor in this fashion is either possible or desired.

As the dependent claims 3-5, 10, 11, and 15-18 serve to further distinguish the invention over the cited prior art, those claims should also be allowable. Therefore, the Applicants respectfully request that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case. If the Office believes that there remain any impediments to such a Notice of Allowance, the undersigned would welcome a telephone call to resolve such issues as quickly as possible.

<p style="text-align: center;">CERTIFICATE OF MAILING</p> <p>I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail on the date indicated below and addressed to: Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>August 5, 2003</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Warner J. Delaune, Jr.</u></p> <p>Warner J. Delaune, Jr.</p>

Respectfully submitted:

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